

The Flat Pipe

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around it, but were taught and trained to be quiet around it and to observe reverence toward it.

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No whistling or crying was permitted in the keeper's lodge. The keeper and co-keeper were forbidden to cry in the presence of the Pipe, if, for instance, they had lost a relative. A crying baby was never allowed in the lodge with the Pipe. As soon as the infant started to cry it was taken out. If, as previously noted, a man who had a young wife with a baby took the Pipe, she and the infant would be sent out of the Pipe lodge to a nearby lodge.

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Dogs were never allowed to enter the lodge where the Pipe was. If the keeper or co-keeper owned a dogskin robe, the rules forbade their using it.

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The people were not allowed to go to the keeper's lodge to get fire, as they used to go to other lodges in the early morning.

Breaking bones to extract marrow was prohibited in the keeper's lodge. If this were done, some accident, such as the breaking of a leg or arm, would happen to some relative of the keeper [or of the delinquent?].

[264]

The door of the keeper's lodge had to be kept closed, and the back cover of the lodge could not be lifted up in the warm summer-time to get air.

A war party before starting off would sing at the door of each clan chief's lodge, but not at the door of the keeper's.

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When people went to the keeper's lodge for a social smoke and feast, they had to keep their wits about them and watch their speech carefully lest they should unthinkingly tell lies, vulgar or obscene stories, or start a war-deed contest.

There was a very strict prohibition against telling lies in the keeper's lodge.

If two men, while in the keeper's lodge, forgot themselves and started a war-deed contest, the keeper would remind them: "You are mistaken in talking so in here. Now you will have to continue for three days and nights." During this time all who were present when the slip was first made had to stay day and night in the lodge of the keeper, who would provide them with food and tobacco. These listeners would egg on and laughingly banter the two contestants and decide on the winner. After a while the pair's

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[511] praying and singing were done at other seasons of the year and now far as a more general custom by other fathers of families were points we did not clear up.

• [264] Before eating food, at least in any more or less formal gathering, a portion of the food was offered up with prayer.

[224] Prayer rites and observances for good hunting were few and simple—as compared, for example, with the numerous and complicated ones practiced by the Algonquian-speaking tribes of the taiga. Abundance of food, which principally meant game food, was commonly prayed for. Two of the Sacred Dances, the Law Enforcers' and the Woman's, had as a purpose success in buffalo hunting. But beyond this, hunting entered little into ritual, and we may recall hunting was conspicuously absent from the power quest. We recorded no rites or observances whatever in connection with the gathering of berries, roots or other plant food.

[484] It was customary on crossing rivers to pray to the Last Child for protection, and to throw into the water offerings, especially shells and eagle-tail feathers, for the Last Child, or the water monster, or both, with some words such as, "I give you this." Sometimes, too, some prayer and offering would be made by a person going to swim, or on other occasions of water hazard.

During or just before severe thunderstorms, various prayer and other procedures were resorted to, many of them directed to Bha'a, the storm being.

Seeking indirectly or asking directly the prayers of the aged, especially for long life, took several different forms, and played an important role in Gros Ventre life, as we have explained elsewhere.

There were many different ways of seeking the prayers of the aged. We recorded the following, which may or may not exhaust the list: crying before a lodge, offering a pipe, promising a sweat-lodge, "holy boiling," providing a feast, doing favors of various kinds.

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888 "Holy boiling," to which we have not as yet referred, was an observance distinct both from the preceding ones and from feasting a group of aged people. It was intended primarily for some one person, man or woman, although others partook of the meal, and

782 [white man above, Our Father] in our prayer, so you would return safe: 'Oh, White Man Above, Our Father, spare her life. If you are going to take anybody, we are willing that you should take us in her place. She is young and has children and lives happy. But we two are old and starved anyway, so if you want to take anybody, take us.'

"I told him: 'An operation is not dangerous if you have it in time.' Strangely enough both he and his wife died within a month. It was just like he had bought my life. I feel badly even now when I think of it. Their one son married one of my daughters. . . . Old man Magpie was one of the old timers."

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264 Food offerings, except perhaps the puppy meat given the ancestral spirit helper, were typical "first-fruits" sacrifices, made before eating. These offerings were regularly made, as we have seen, before any more or less formal, festive or ritual meal partaken of by a group, and at least very commonly before even everyday family meals at home. The latter everyday usage is explained in the following statement of informants:

Charles Buckman: "Before eating, a piece of meat is held up and so offered to the Master of All, and then is put on the ground."

Coming Daylight: "Whenever they [the Gros Ventres] eat and in their ceremonies, they never eat right away, but have a prayer, like this [here she held up her right hand]: 'Now here it is, I promised you, Our Father, the One Traveling [sun], and the Last Child.'"

The little chunks of food given in this first-fruits sacrifice rite to the Last Child were "pushed in the dirt or ground and sort of covered up with a little dirt,"—in the indoor modern rite previously described, deposited in cracks in the plank flooring.

782 As appears from the foregoing accounts considerable minor variations occurred in this first-fruits rite at meals.

The only first-fruits sacrifice connected with hunting proper, as distinct from eating, was the piece of liver and bit of fat deposited, as a thank offering to Little Spirit, on the west side of killed game.

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262] Puppy meat was looked upon by the Gros Ventres as a delicacy. Cooked puppy meat was commonly offered as food to ghost helpers on their visits. After the puppy was killed, the hair was